



CITY OF FALLS CHURCH

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Falls Church City Expands Parkland With Agreement to Purchase Hamlett Tract

FALLS CHURCH, VA – On Tuesday, Oct. 11, 2005 the City of Falls Church entered into an agreement to purchase the three-acre forested “Hamlett Tract” located at 601 W. Broad St. in the City of Falls Church. The purchase price is \$1,040,000. The City currently owns more than an acre of land adjacent to this parcel, enabling the creation of a four and half acre contiguous park with the addition of the Hamlett Tract. This will be the fourth largest park in the City, behind Cherry Hill Park, Crossman Park/Four Mile Run, and Cavalier Trail Park.

“Given the declining opportunities to preserve land as open space, I’m delighted the City has been able to protect this environmentally important three acres,” says Vice Mayor Marty Meserve. “I would like thank the Open Space Acquisition Task Force for being the impetus for moving us into action after talking about this for so many years.”

The agreement has a term of 180 days and is contingent upon final approval by City Council. During this period of time, a resolution authorizing the purchase will be prepared for Council action. The purchase of the property requires review and approval by the Planning Commission, pursuant to the City Charter.

“This section of our City now has three major developments, and with development it is imperative that we protect and add open space. Along with the one and a half acres we presently own, this will give us a total of four and half acres for new parkland. I am glad this project was placed on the front burner for acquisition and that Council set aside money in our open space fund,” says Council Member Lindy Hockenberry.

The seller is Lee Estates, LLC represented by McEneaney Associates, Arlington Office.

Documents for Council action are expected to be ready for a City Council meeting this fall. At that meeting, Council will refer the purchase to the Planning Commission. Following the Planning Commission’s recommendation, the Resolution will return to Council for final passage.

"Our area is increasingly being paved over. This action is very beneficial for our citizens because it secures a large tract of open land in the heart of our City for their use and enjoyment in the future and has significantly positive environmental effects," says Council Member David F. Snyder.

The Hamlett Tract has been identified in the City’s Comprehensive Plan for purchase and use as a park for more than 30 years. Last year, the Open Space Task Force, which is currently developing an open space acquisition plan for the City, formally requested that the City Council pursue purchase of this property as its top priority. The Task Force is chaired by Barry Buschow. The City Council also received numerous petitions calling for the purchase of this property from City residents.

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“This is the largest undeveloped parcel remaining in the City. Because the property is adjacent to existing land owned by the City, and portions of it are in the floodplain, the Open Space Task Force believes that this was a critical purchase,” Buschow says. He also notes that the project demonstrates the City’s commitment to open space and will benefit the environment and the floodplain.

Funding for the purchase was allocated last spring, when the City refinanced a 1995 series bond to take advantage of lower interest rates. The savings from that bond refinancing were dedicated to open space acquisition in the FY06 Budget, and will be used for this purchase.

The City’s Recreation & Parks staff will begin a parks Master Plan process for this space, similar to each of the other parks in the City, when the sale is finalized.

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